Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 152256Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5227
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMCONSUL BELIZE

UNCLAS GUATEMALA 1658

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM PINT GT
SUBJECT:US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY - CONTINUING GUATEMALAN REACTION

REF: A) GUATEMALA 1579 (NOTAL), B) 1584, C) 1585

1. SUMMARY. TO DATE GUATEMALAN PRESS HAS SITLL NOT REPORTED ON RECENTLY RELEASED DEPARTMENT REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN GUATEMALA. NEVERTHELESS, REACTION TO AND COMMENT ON ADMINISTRATION'S GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY CONTINUES TO RECEIVE HEAVY PLAY. PRESS QUOTES ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER AS SAYING GUATEMALA IS "CONCERNED" AT US POLICY, AND SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS OF VARIOUS POLITICAL LEANINGS HAVE EXPRESSED NEGATIVE OPINIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. DESPITE CONGRESS' RECENT RELEASE OF DEPARTMENT'S REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, NOTHING HAS APPEARED AS OF TUESDAY MARCH 15, IN GUATEMALAN PRESS WHICH WOULD WOULD INDICATE THAT A REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN GUATEMALA EXISTS. TO CONTRARY, ALTHOUGH GOG HAS ALREADY RESPONDED (REF B)
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TO DIPLOMATIC NOTE CONTAINING TEXT OF REPORT ON GUATEMALA, DEPUTY PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY WAS REPORTED IN PRESS ON MARCH 12 TO HAVE SAID THAT GOG HAD RECEIVED NOTHING OFFICIAL INDICATING THAT USG HAD INCLUDED GUATEMALA AMONG THOSE CONTRIES WHERE HUMAN RIGHTS ARE NOT RESPECTED.

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3. NEVERTHELESS, COMMENT ON ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY IN GENERAL CONTINUES HEAVY. ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER OBIOLS TOLD PRESS MARCH 14, ONLY TWO DAYS AFTER FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA MADE EVEN STRONGER STATEMENT (REF C), THAT "IT WORRIES US THAT A GOVERNMENT ARROGATES TO ITSELF THE RIGHTS TO JUDGE THE INTERNAL CONDUCT OF OTHER COUNTRIES, BECAUSE THIS MEANS A VIOLATION OF THE RULES THAT REGULATE LEGAL EQUALITY OF STATES AND SOVEREIGNTY OF NATIONS." OBIOLS COMMENTED THAT ALL LATIN AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONS PROVIDE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, BUT THAT BECAUSE OF HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES, LIKE PRESENT WORLD STRUGGLE BETWEEN TWO IDEOLOGIES, ACTIONS ARE TAKEN WHICH VIOLATE PEOPLE'S HUMAN RIGHTS. (OBIOLS WAS CLEARLY REFERRING TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.) HE DECLINED TO SPECULATE ON WHETHER US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY WOULD STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS OR HARDEN POSITIONS OF LATIN MILITARY REGIMES.

4. PRESS REACTION HAS RANGED OVER PAST FEW DAYS FROM MODERATE TO SENSATIONALIST. PROBABLY BEST REASONED COMMENTARY APPEARED MARCH 12 IN RESPECTED INDEPENDENT AFTERNOON JOURNAL IMPARCIAL. EDITORIAL SAYS THAT IN MODERN ERA WHEN STATES HAVE GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES AND GREATER OPPORTUNITIES TO INTERFERE IN HUMAN RIGHTS INCREASED WATCHFULNESS IS NEEDED. CONSEQUENTLY, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS WHILE AT SAME TIME RESPECTING RIGHTS AND SOVEREIGNTY OF
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STATES IS IMPORTANT. HOWEVER, "POSITION TAKEN BY PRESIDENT CARTER IN MAKING HIMSELF A SUPREME JUDGE HAS CHANGED SITUATION. MR. CARTER'S GOOD INTENTIONS CAN BE CHANNELED THROUGH INTERNATION ORGANIZATIONS, WHICH ALTHOUGH SUBJECT TO CONFUSION AND ERROR, AT LEAST HAVE SOME 'RULES OF THE GAME'...THE GREATNESS AND STRENGTH OF THE US CALLS FOR GREATER MODERATION, COMPREHENSION OF DIFFERENCES AND THE GREATER HUMILITY OF THOSE WHO ARE ALSO NOT WITHOUT SIN."

5. IN TWO-PART COLUMN IN LIBERAL EL GRAFICO MARCH 12 AND 13 A COLUMNIST CLAIMS THAT US POLICY OF ADMITTING PAST GUILTS FOR INTERVENTION IN LATIN AMERICAN AFFAIRS (HE CITES TYSON STATEMENT) AND TAKING UP BANNER OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS ONLY A STRATAGEM TO "SAVE NORTH AMERICAN IMPERIALISM" IN LATIN AMERICA. THEREFORE WHILE THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT WILL SOON ALL HATE CARTER, IT IS ONLY THE LEFT THAT WILL HAVE GOOD REASON TO DO SO.

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6. TWO OTHER COLUMNS ON US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY APPEARED IN CONSERVATIVE AFTERNOON DAILY LA HORA. IN FIRST COLUMN MARCH 11 MAVERICK BUT WIDELY READ COLUMNIST CLEMENTE MARROQUIN ROJAS, VICE PRESIDENT OF GUATEMALA 1966-70, SAYS PRESIDENT CARTER IS EITHER A GENIOUS USING ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO BECOME A NEW CAESAR IN THE WORK, IN WHCH CASE HE RISKS THE FATE THAT BOTH CAESAR AND JOHN KENNEDY MET, OR HE IS CRAZY AND HIS CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WILL HELP THE COMMUNISTS TAKE OVER IN MANY COUNTRIES, AT WHICH TIME HUMAN RIGHTS WILL BE SUPPRESSED.

7. SECOND LA HORA COLUMN MARCH 14 BY ANOTHR COLUMNIST ACCUSES PRESIDENT CARTER OF "PUTTING NORTH AMERICAN NOSES INTO OUR AFFAIRS" DESPITE FACT THAT IN US POLICE USE IMPROPER PROCEDURES (HE CITES US TELEVISION POLICE STORIES) AND GOVZRNMENT SECRET AND SEMISECRET ORGANIZA-
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TIONS EXIST.

8. COMMENT. WHILE REACTION HAS VARIED FROM VERY POSITIVE TO VERY NEGATIVE AND FROM REASONED TO IRRATIONAL, GUATEMALAN INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT HAS BEEN, CONTINUES TO BE AND IS LIKELY TO REMAIN VERY HIGH. REACTION WILL, OF COURSE, BE PARTICULARLY HEAVY WHEN DEPARTMENT REPORT ON GUATEMALA APPEARS IN PRESS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 GUATEMALA 1579
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3098214
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY - CONTINUING GUATEMALAN REACTION
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, PFOR, GT, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2cfa80b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009